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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006245

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2015

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SUBJECT: SOUTHEASTERN TURKEY ACTIVIST ON PKK AND GOT'S
POLICY TOWARD KURDS

(U) Classified by Embassy Ankara A/DCM Thomas Goldberger,
E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) This message is from Consulate Adana.

2. (C) Summary: Diyarbakir Human Rights Association President Selahattin Demirtas reflects the views of many Consulate regional contacts regarding recent increased PKK activities in the Southeast. He believes that both the PKK and the military are carrying on against each other in a miscalculated manner,⁸ and that hatred against the Kurds is increasing in Turkey, but denies any broad nationwide support for the PKK. He supports the rise of a pro-Kurdish political party, but believes that the newly organized DSM is not up to the task due to their members, closeness to the PKK, coupled with a lack of experience. Demirtas believes that, due to miscalculations within the PM's inner circle, the military was allowed to scuttle the PM's Kurdish initiative, leaving people in the Southeast with little expectation of follow through on the PM's August 12 speech. He fears the GoT's use of maximalist interpretations of the criminal code to intimidate regional political players, such as DEHAP leaders in Adana, Van and Cizre. Demirtas would like to see a longer PKK cease-fire with more democratization and better GOT preparation for some kind of conditional or partial amnesty for PKK cadres. Comment: We find Demirtas, approach to the problems besetting the region to be among the most thoughtful and well-reasoned of the many that we heard during our multiple visits to southeast Turkey over the past month. End summary and comment.

3. (C) During a September 27 meeting with ConOffs, attorney and Diyarbakir Human Rights Association President Selahattin Demirtas echoed the views of other Consulate contacts in the region regarding recent increased PKK activities in southeast Turkey. Demirtas said that although their aim was not to start a broad conflict as in the 1990's, both the PKK and the military are carrying on against each other in a miscalculated manner,⁸ even while the social and political effects of their actions are more effective than they were during the 1990's. Citing the surge of nationalism nationwide, increasing MHP activity and recent incidents involving the Turkish flag, Demirtas said that hatred against the Kurds is increasing in the country, creating more ethnic separation than ever. He added that those who are supporting the PKK are having a significant effect among Kurdish politicians, especially DEHAP and now DSM circles.

4. (C) The central dilemma, as Demirtas sees it, is that the Kurds are fed up with violence and oppressive GoT policies, yet there was little chance that the GoT would abandon its "assimilation policies," since it has too much at stake in maintaining the status quo. Demirtas outlined for ConOffs a twisted common cause of work between the Army and the PKK wherein if the PKK were to give up its weapons the military would lose power. In this way, said Demirtas, both sides justified their dangerous activities to their respective internal audiences as reasonable vices.⁸

5. (C) Demirtas doubts that there is broad nationwide support for the PKK, saying only 20-30 percent of Kurds support the PKK, but roughly 50 percent of Kurds in the southeastern Turkey support them.⁸ For this reason, Demirtas supports the rise of a political party to keep the Kurdish, southeastern Turkey agenda on the national stage. Still he underlined that the DSM was not that party. He added that the DSM's members are ill-experienced and too close to the PKK to be constructive political players.

6. (C) Demirtas laid out for ConOffs a recent dynamic that illustrated the confusion regarding GoT policy toward the Kurds: The PM told a foreign reporter in a recent interview that he had had discussions within his own circles regarding the Kurdish initiative and thought he had gotten the Turkish General Staff's green light,⁸ but the PM miscalculated by raising the political aspects of the new initiative first, as opposed to the military's preference for social-economic development first and the political approach later. As a result, TGS CHOD General Ozkok made speeches warning against ethnic nationalism⁸ and calling for societal solidarity⁸ in Van, Diyarbakir and Adana in mid-September, wherein he undercut the PM's proposals. Dialogue on the issue then returned back to Ankara for further internal GOT deliberations, where it appears to be stalled. Demirtas

emphasized that people in southeastern Turkey now see little likelihood of follow through on the PM,s August 12 speech.

17. (C) Furthermore, Demirtas sees GoT Justice officials using maximalist interpretations of the criminal code to try to intimidate regional political players, pointing to regionwide arrests of former DEHAP leaders in Adana, Nusaybin, Van and Mardin. He recalled that the TGS had called for more tools to combat the PKK after passage of a new criminal law, leading to a quick drafting of new anti-terror legislation. The Justice Minister then had re-directed this legislation by exhorting prosecutors to use existing criminal code authority in a maximalist fashion; hence the DEHAP arrests in which even the display of a PKK flag, use of the name Apo8 or Ocalan,8 or display of Ocalan,s picture is defined as incitement to violence punishable by five years of imprisonment.

18. (C) When asked what he thought would happen next, Demirtas exclaimed that &sadly, now that we are seeing an increase in the number of corpses and funerals associated with the (GoT,s) battle with the PKK, a new, multi-year cooling off period may be necessary to bring greater calm. Emotions and ill-will have been raised to high levels again.8 &We need a long cease-fire now, with more democratization and real GOT preparation for some sort of conditional, partial amnesty,8 said Demirtas.

19. (C) What would an amnesty look like? Demirtas said that it would be &something like a surrender to Turkish authorities. Then judges would start a formal legal process under which former PKK cadres would be found subject to the law and placed under a probationary process wherein for a certain number of years he or she would be prohibited from participating in politics, and could not enjoy certain public services and must lead a peaceful life.8 Demirtas thought that such an amnesty should last &maybe five years,8 but the opportunity for using this type of amnesty as a reconciliation tool has been postponed by renewed violence. &Public opinion is too stirred up now,8 said Demirtas. He also cautioned that the terminology used in any new amnesty would be very important, recalling how the PKK leadership had been alienated by the last &return home8 law,s use of &repentance,8 which GoT prosecutors considered an essential element to generate Turkish public support for the law to gain popular legitimacy, but PKK leaders considered this a requirement for potential former cadres to deny the &validity of their struggle.8 This philosophical divergence of perception married with &extremist use of required public statements of confession in some Southeast provinces undermined the prospects of the last amnesty-like efforts,8 said Demirtas.

110. (C) Bio note: Demirtas, a Zaza speaker and former U.S. international visitor program participant, has a one-year old daughter; his wife is a teacher in rural Diyarbakir. He may serve his required military service this year.
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